



THE

JACG NEWSLETTER

JACG

THE JERSEY ATARI COMPUTER GROUP

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

If you haven't yet signed up for GENIE (FREE!!!)...the opportunity still awaits you. Just follow these easy steps (I know they're easy, I was able to do it!).

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Upon connection enter: HHH

At the U# prompt enter: XJM11887, ATARI and press "return"

You can now sign up for FREE.

SEARCHING

There may be an opening for the appointed post of EDITOR of this NEWSLETTER. I have now "covered the 'beat' " for more than two years...and intend to continue with the JACG in a very active role. To do so, I feel that it may be necessary to relinquish the day-to-day activities related to the NEWSLETTER in order to maintain support in other areas.

I do not want to minimize the importance of the position of editor, nor the time required each month to get a quality issue out on time. It is a very labor intensive effort, not to mention BBS access time to D/L articles, nor the time and mileage involved in printing and delivery. Anyone desirous in participating in the continuation of the JACG editorial tradition...please contact me.

By the way, don't think that my literary? efforts will be discontinued. "NOISE from Noyes" and "Doctor B-Bit" can be expected to be heard from!

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Dec. 2, 1988

Exec Board Meeting

Dec. 10, 1988

JACG Monthly Meeting

Jan. 14, 1989

JACG Monthly Meeting:
Children's Special



New Jersey Jewel

I had the 'opportunity' to spend two weeks in beautiful downtown New Jersey this month - which fits right in between a root canal and a tax audit. Somehow, fate arranged my route between the motel and my workplace to pass Gemini Enterprises, one of six or seven small stores facing the street. This particular operation attracted my eye with numerous Atari banners, signs and displays, and not really expecting much out there in North Podunk, I stopped one Saturday night and peeked in the window. Holy Trackball!! This guy has HUNDREDS of 8-bit and ST programs hung on his walls!! I would estimate 650 square feet (every available inch) of wall space crammed with software, and more spilling onto the floor. I could hardly wait to get back there during business hours, but I finally made it during a looonng lunch on Tuesday. What a place!! I have been to a couple of big time Atari dealers (like B&C) and I must say that Gemini is right up there. And, their prices are not bad at all. There must be one big bunch of Atari users out there to support a store like that and, indeed, there was a pile of newsletters from the local group, the Jersey Atari Computer Group - JACG. Even turned out that the other customer in the store was the JACG newsletter editor, Dave Noyes. Talk about being in pig heaven! This store really made my whole trip less dismal and should be considered a valuable national resource for the Atari 8-bit users. They do sell mail-order and even feature free shipping on orders over \$100. If you have been looking for a piece of software with no success, give Gemini a call. If they don't have it, you might as well give up, pal.

Gemini Enterprises
86 Ridgedale Avenue
Cedar Knolls, NJ 07927

800+543-3813 (orders)
201+267-0988 (else)

Mon - Sat 10am - 4pm

from:SLCC JOURNAL - October, 1988 - Bob Woolley

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Linda Peckham

So Long, and Farewell

As the year winds down, it's time to look back and take stock. How has the JACG done this past year? We're still in existence. We're still putting out a monthly newsletter of all-new articles. The disk libraries have grown, especially the ST library. We took tables at one of the Ken Norton shows. That's all good. The BBS is doing well, despite occasional problems.

Our membership has slipped below 200. And the attendance at the meetings reflects that -- October was no better than August. That's not so good. The membership drop is endemic to all Atari clubs, so it's not just us. We can't do much about membership levels if Atari doesn't advertise and sell their computers. What we can do is keep our enthusiasm for our computers and our computer club going. As long as we have people willing to talk about their computers, write about their computers, take time to help others with their computers, and spend time as librarians, newsletter editors, secretaries, treasurers, sysops, presidents and vice-presidents, the Jersey Atari Computer Group will survive.

Looking back at Atari computers in general, I think one can say that the eight-bitters are at least not orphan computers -- the XE Game System has probably helped more games be developed, while 1988 has seen the 80-column card, the new disk drive, and three variations on the mouse-driven, desktop metaphor. For the 16-bitters, my own feeling seems to be a sense of hanging in there, of nothing really new showing up for the ST, and yet with a good potential, if promises would just turn into reality. (If the new desktop packages -- Calamus and PageStream -- are as good as they advertise, IF Atari finally gets a second factory underway, IF Atari starts advertising in more than specialty magazines, if if if --)

I've enjoyed working with the club and the executive board this past year -- though believe me, being President, ST Vice-President and ST Librarian all at the same time is a bit too much. For those of you who were not at the October meeting, I was laid off from my job at Kearfott, and have decided to move back to Kansas, to finish a Master's degree in Engineering, and then search for a job in that part of the country. I hope to keep in touch with the club -- I intend to try to keep my occasional column going, though perhaps with a namechange -- From the Wheatfields (instead of From the Desktop). If nothing else, one of these days I should be getting my version of Page Stream, formerly known as Publishing Partner Professional....

So farewell and good luck, and keep computing!



NOISE FROM NOYES

by Dave Noyes

In the hardware bargain of the month department...run, don't walk to GEMINI ENTERPRISES in Cedar Knolls. Why? I'll tell you why...for \$19.95 (plus, of course, NJ's 6%) you can walk away with a genuine, brand spankin' new, still in the original wrapper...ATARI 1020 PLOTTER. C'mon...for that money...no ATARI 8-bitter should now be without one. The contents (not even counting the plotter itself) are worth more than the \$19.95. You get an ATARI I/O cable, a power supply that will run (the plotter of course) a 1050 drive, or an 850 interface or the 800 computer, two (2) sets of four (4) pens, a roll of paper, and a cassette with plotter programs on it. By the way, you get the plotter also!

In the UNRUMOR department...Got a nice letter from PAGE 6 (the great 8-bit ATARI magazine for the U.K.). They admit to a distribution problem (solved) and a need to tighten expenses (but not at the expense of quality)...and will have an issue out this month, and state that publication will be on schedule thereafter...that's good news!

DOCTOR 8-BIT ARRIVES !!

I will be available as an 8-bit resource, to bounce questions, and problems around; discuss recent developments in the 8-bit world, provide tutorial assistance, and share my 8-bit experience (NOT in PROGRAMMING !! I'm a USER !!) with any who may wish. I will be in the podium area prior to each JACG meeting, from 9:30 to 9:45 am...I look forward to seeing you 8-bitters!

Have you logged on to our BBS lately? Call: (201) 298-0161 and join the electronic communications age. U/L, D/L P.D. files, chat on the message bases, send E-Mail, find out what's going on in the local ATARI community. Don't have a modem...shame...1200 baud modems are under \$100.00 dollars...a 2400 baud modem can be purchased for \$149.00. A 300 baud modem could probably be picked up somewhere...you'd probably be paid to relieve someone's inventory carrying charges!!

With the HOLIDAY season upon us...crank open your wallet (you inveterate 8-bitters) and purchase the JACG HOLIDAY disk. Seasonal graphics with sound on the front...and over 100 Print Shop (tm) holidayish icons on the reverse side. Something for all, multi-occasion and ecumenical!

Have a happy turkey day... 'til next month...



PDG-1.6

By Linda Peckham

Disk of the Month #125

Utility Disk #8: Graphics Utility Disk #1

This month's special contains a number of graphics utility programs and accessories. Included are:

ARTGALRY.ACC -- An accessory to display a NEO, Degas or TNY picture from within any GEM program, or from the desktop.

CONVGIF.PR -- This program converts Degas pictures to the GIF format, which is a format usable on other computers.

DEG2COLR.PR -- The COLR format is a fairly obscure ST format, but if you need it, this will allow conversion from Degas pics.

DEGA2NEO.TTP -- Converts Degas to NEO

DEGADISP.PR -- Displays uncompressed Degas pics, any resolution, any monitor.

DEGASAVE.TOS -- Allows screen snapshots to be automatically saved to disk.

DSLIDE.PR -- Version 2. Shows Degas, Neo, Tiny, Spectrum pics, with or without a DSLIDE.INF file, shows color (except Spectrum) on mono, and vice-versa. Very good!

IFFSPC.PR -- Converts IFF files to Spectrum

J_CNVTR.PR -- Converts color Degas to 8-bit.

KOA2DEGA.PR -- Converts (8-bit) Koaladap pics to Degas.

KWIKPIC.ACC -- Shows Neo, uncompressed Degas

NEO2DEGA.PR -- Converts Neochrome to Degas

PICSW7.PR -- Converts just about anything to Degas or Neo. (8-bit, Macpaint, IFF...)

SHOWGIF.PR -- Shows GIF pictures

SNAP*.PR -- 3 related programs to take and save screen shots.

SPECDEG.TTP -- Convert Spectrum to Degas

SPECGIF4.PR -- Converts Spectrum to GIF.

TEXSHOW.PR -- Super-Neo show, fits extra lines at bottom of screen for displaying text messages.

TNYSTUF2.PR -- Converts between Degas uncompressed, Neo and TNY.

TNYVIEW3.PR -- Displays TNY pics, same rez as monitor.

NEW DISKS

#122 UTILITY DISK #7: ARCHIVERS -- This disk contains the latest version of the ARC.TTP (fixed 5.21), version 1.97 of the GEM shell for the archiver, a program to list the contents of all ARC files on a disk to a text file, a de-archiver shell (un-arc's all ARC files on disk), a Merge ARC program, and a demonstration version of ARCIT.PR, which can archive folders or entire disks. A fairly extensive manual (written for the IBM version) is included. This disk is based on, but not identical to, the Current Notes archiver disk.

#123 EMACS 3.9 1/4 -- Micro EMACS is an industry-wide text editor used by programmers. This is the latest version available for the ST, and includes a spelling checker. This disk is from Current Notes. (This replaces the JACG_LIB.019, which was withdrawn.)

#124 FRZOOM Version 6A -- Running on both Color and Monochrome, this disk contains a GEM fractal generator program. The program allows zooming, a preview mode, a "movie" mode, and four different types of fractals -- the Mandelbrot set, the Julia, and two "attractors" (if you want to know what attractors are, read CHAOS by James Gleick). (Current Notes)

#126 KIDS' DISK #1 -- This is the first of three disks filled with programs for younger kids. All of these were written by

Mr. D. Brumleve in GFA Basic, and are run in low-resolution only. The programs on this disk are:

KIDMENU2.PR -- This program looks for most of the KID programs on all the available drives, then displays a picture screen from which to select a program.

KIDGRID.PR	Graphics Design	Age Range: 2-6
KIDPUZZL.PR	Discovery Puzzle	Age Range: 2-8
KIDSKETC.PR	Graphics Design	Age Range: 6-10
POTATO.PR	Matching Game	Age Range: 2-6

#127 KIDS' DISK #2

KIDMIXUP.PR	Sequence Game	Age Range: 2-6
KIDMUSIC.PR	Tune Player	Age Range: 0-6
KIDPIANO.PR	Piano/Organ	Age Range: 2-6
KIDGRID2.PR	Graphics Design	Age Range: 6-10

#128 KIDS' DISK #3

KIDNOTES.PR	Keyboard Tutor	Age Range: 6-10
KIDGRAPH.PR	Graphics Design	Age Range: 6-10
KIDSHAPE.PR	Graphics Design	Age Range: 2-8

#129 CLIP-ART #8: CHRISTMAS -- This disk is filled with drawn and digitized images useful for the Christmas season of the year. There are two sets of pictures, XMAS01 -- 15, and XMAS_01 -- _07. The latter group is part of a series of shareware clip-art uploaded to GENie. Samples are shown below.

#130D CAT-NAP -- This Cyber animation requires a color monitor, double-sided drive and one megabyte of memory. Late a night, a cat discovers that the remote control does more than change channels.

#131D THE FINAL FRONTIER -- Requires double-sided drive, color monitor, one megabyte and AVS.PR from START, NOV. 1988. This Cyber/Digitized Sound show is an excellent demonstration of the AVS.PR available in the latest START. The digitized sound contains the introductory sequence from the original Star Trek show.

UPDATED DISKS

#54 ST Transformer is now up to version 2.3.

JACG_LIB.000 -- Descriptions completed, includes up to #131D.

Disk Prices

JACG_LIB.000 (catalog) \$2.00 (\$1.00 with old JACG_LIB.000 disk)

Members:

Disk of the Month	\$3.00
Regular Disk	\$4.00

Non-Members \$6.00

Mail-order, add \$1.00 per disk. (Send order to Bill Garmany, Jr., 13 Wellington, NJ 07039)



JACG

THE COMPUTER SHOW

by Donald Forbes - JACG

Once a year you make a pilgrimage to the business computer show in New York -- if you are in the computer business and want to know what the future holds.

It is 9:50 a.m. Thursday October 13. You are standing at the corner of 11th Avenue and 33 Street in Manhattan. The sky is clear, the temperature is 46 degrees, and a strong breeze comes over the Hudson river from New Jersey.

Before you is the Jacob Javitz exposition center, a block-long glass palace. Ten minutes from now you will be on the huge floor, confronted by 1,500 exhibitors, and a chance to find out what is new today and what the future holds.

Atari

As a self-appointed investigative reporter for the JACG newsletter, you scan the list of exhibitors for the name Atari. Nothing. Atari, evidently, is not interested in the New York business market. You find two small references to Atari at the show. WordPerfect has a leaflet at their booth promoting their word processor for the Atari ST. The standard library reference book of computer software (Bowker's Encyclopedia in two volumes) lists 45 pages (yes, 45 pages) of software for the 8-bit Atari and numerous pages of software for the ST. But there was no other sign of Atari at the show.

ComputerWorld

These people each year hand out free copies of their magazine as well as green lapel buttons (who wears them?) with messages such as:

What kind of spool am I?

Tape me to your leader!

Send in the clones.

Life's a batch!

Ever felt like a dip switch?

I think, therefore I LAN.

I love it when you dBase me

Get your VAX straight

Icon do windows

Tape librarians will mount anything

Trainer

At the booth of an exhibitor of training materials Ed Sykes recognizes both my name and my business connection. "You are the gentleman that wrote up a five-page evaluation of our computer-based tutorial on WordPerfect five-oh! It was a great help to us." Surprise! I looked at the display and said, "I would love to evalu-

ate your tutorial on Advanced WordPerfect." He said, "You have it in your office." So now I will have to write another five-page report.

Map Man

The display shows a map of the streets of Lower Manhattan. "Now you take your mouse and pretend it is your truck making deliveries to each of these locations marked in yellow. The computer figures out the best route, taking one-way streets into account, and gives you the total mileage in a few seconds. If your route was 3 miles and the trucker claims 6 miles, you know that he had lunch at his girl friend's place."

"Or you want to open up a new fast food place in the area. Our map can show all the existing places, as well as the locations of all prospective franchise buyers. We want the buyers to be near their franchises. This computerized map lets us pick the best locations. We can do this for any metropolitan area in the country.

"If a salesman has to visit five cities in California, we can give him the best route, as well as the right hotels."

Translator

Need to translate manuals and documents for overseas markets? Machine translation is here, not at 100 per cent accuracy, but in the 90s. This huge Fortran program takes the input (English or German) and puts the text through a meta-language translator which rewrites all the sentences so that the meaning becomes clear (using an "intermediary semanto-syntactic abstraction language"). The method combines analysis of the relative positions of words in a sentence with analysis of the possible meanings of each word to "deduce" the most likely meaning of the sentence as a whole. This analysis involves artificial intelligence and computational linguistic techniques as well as a table-driven rule-based approach.

Once the source text has been rewritten into clear understandable sentences, then the translation into the object language (German, French, Spanish) can be done mechanically (but a human editor must still give the final OK). Why in the world Fortran? The founders started in 1969 and have been doing this commercially since 1979 (investing \$25 million and 1,000 man years), for customers such as Hewlett-Packard, Unisys, Cullinet Software, the Defense Department, the Canadian government, and even the Shah of Iran.

IBM

The hoopla this year was for the new \$200,000 minicomputer, the AS/400, to meld the best features of the anemic software-loaded System 36 with the powerful software-poor System 38. You had to stand in line all

day to get into the show. IBM may sell 70,000 by the end of next year, but I don't have that kind of money.

Printer

My little Epson MX-80 Grafrax goes back to 1981, and is now obsolete. I asked the Epson exhibitor what has replaced my old workhorse. "When people ask me that question, I always ask them: Is your old machine still running. They all say: It runs just fine." My machine also runs just fine, but to get the most mileage out of the \$260 (including tax) that I just shelled out for WordPerfect, it would be nice to have a printer that could take advantage of all the desktop publishing features in the way of fonts, typesizes and graphics. The replacement, I found out, is the Epson FX-850, today's workhorse, with gorgeous graphics capabilities which lists for about \$500. I will have to think it over.

What's Next

This was the day that Steven Jobs, Apple's founder, introduced his new NEXT computer system (Motorola 68030 chip, 8 megs of RAM, a 256 meg erasable optical disk, a 17-inch monochrome screen with a million pixels, UNIX operating system compatibility, a 400 dots per inch laser printer, and an \$8,500 price tag).

The machine is aimed at the university market, and will not be available until the summer. The machine fits into what industry observers contend is the wave of the future: an intuitive graphical interface, a multitasking operating system, with an SQL (Structured Query Language) database server, compact disk quality audio and WYSIWIG (what you see is what you get) display.

What will next year's show bring?



G+plus

The GDOS Replacement

Paul Machiaverna - JACG

GDOS. The good, the bad, and the ugly. Good because it adds capabilities to the ST. Bad because a program which uses GDOS requires you to reboot the computer to properly load the correct information for every program. Ugly because it slows down the ST considerably. But, there is a solution. G+plus from CodeHead Software. Incidentally, the name is pronounced 'Gee Plus', not 'Gee Plus Plus'.

G+plus is a totally compatible replacement for GDOS. The easiest way to use this program is to replace the GDOS found in the auto folder of each program which uses GDOS with G+plus. Now when you reboot that disk, G+plus will read the ASSIGN.SYS and load the proper files. Immediately you will notice that the ST did not slow down anywhere near as much as when you use GDOS. The reason for this is explained in the included manual which states that GDOS is written in C, while G+plus is written in 68000 Assembly Language. As we all know, nothing is faster than Assembly Language on any machine. You can even configure G+plus to speed up Desktop operations such as opening a drive icon or calling a Desk Accessory. When you use GDOS the opening of such windows is slowed down to a snail's pace.

Another great feature of G+plus is a Desk Accessory which allows you to make a permanent list of GEM programs and their respective ASSIGN.SYS files. Doing this will enable you to go from program to program without rebooting the computer. And, you do not need to have an ASSIGN.SYS file present during the boot operation. This is a real boon to any Hard Disk owner who uses programs which originally use GDOS. Unfortunately, this feature doesn't work with Timework's Desktop Publisher ST without an added step. You must first run the FONTWID.APP program, then the actual PUBLISH.APP program. However, this is only necessary if you run a different GDOS application before you run Publisher.

Complete information about GDOS and G+plus is found in the G+plus owner's manual and in a file included on the disk. If you are a serious user of any program which uses GDOS, G+plus is for you. It costs only a little over \$30 and is well worth it. It is very encouraging to see professional software such as G+plus in the ST market. Now if only CodeHead would release a patch to TOS which would allow faster hard disk writing...

HELP FOR LOST BASIC PROGRAMMERS

Michael D. Hochman - JACG

It wasn't too long ago that I purchased my first home computer, an ATARI 800, with the intention of writing programs for my own amusement and to improve my agility at "Centipede" without depleting my bank account in the arcades of New York. Of course I bargained until I got the best deal for my machine, roller controller, "Centipede" game cartridge and Atari BASIC programming language and manual. What I hadn't bargained for was the lack of instruction the Atari manual had for beginners to programming. It was scarce of information and chock-ful-o-errors. Alas, this episode has a good ending, for as lost as I was in the wasteland of Commodore 64's and Apple II's, there was a haven, an oasis for a budding programmer in a hostile land without user groups. A book was delivered unto me, and it contained many secrets and unlocked great mysteries of Atari's and BASIC. POKE 764,n was a particular favorite spell I often cast on unsuspecting Atari's, which caused confounding looks in salespeople as text flipped upside down or backwards or inverse depending on my mood. I often followed the spell by offering this rocket scientist ridiculously low price for the obviously broken computer adding insult to mental injury (if you haven't guessed, I enjoy torturing salespeople who I feel should know more than I do about the things they sell).

The name of this book you ask? Well patient reader, I'll tell you. The legendary great book was called "Your Atari Computer" by Poole, McNiff, and Cook (\$17.95 Osborne/McGraw Hill Publishers). All drama aside, a book like this can be an indispensable asset to those of us who are a little embarrassed to ask questions at a users group meeting or are just set on doing without the help of others. The tips, practice examples, sample programs and spoon-fed approach to novice programmers makes the learning fast and fun. Bolster this 'ATARI exclusive' manual with any of the run of mill BASIC FOR IDIOTS texts available in bookstores and at flea markets. Apply yourself and you'll see how fast you outgrow the beginner texts.

That's fine for the 8-bitters, but what about 16-bitters. For many people, GFA BASIC (distributed in the U.S. by Michtron) is the defacto BASIC for the ST. Again, the problem was in the translation of the German documentation into English, a process that resulted in typo's and syntax lies. Michtron issued an improved softcovered bound manual but many users have reported that it falls short of the mark. Michtron did hit the bullseye dead center with "GFA BASIC, Programmers Reference Guide, Volume 1" by George W. Miller (Michtron, Inc. publishers).

More than a technical reference as its name may imply, it boasts impressive coverage of all facets of GFA BASIC from

the Editor/Interpreter, BASIC commands and functions, to chapters devoted to computer animation, graphics, sound and music, and input/output through the communications port. Each chapter is laden with examples and the I/O section includes a working terminal program. Appendices include an invaluable collection of BIOS, XBIOS, and GEMDOS functions (whatever the heck they are, I haven't even gotten that far yet!!). Author Miller is quick to remind us that his book is not a tutorial on GFA BASIC but should be used in conjunction with tutorial type books on the language, especially for those who have never played with programming. One such book is "GFA BASIC Training Reboot Camp" by Brumleve and Marks (\$19.95 Michtron, Inc., publishers).

Programming is no exception to the old axiom that states "we must learn to crawl before we can walk", and the "Training Reboot Camp" holds our hands every awkward step of the way, strengthening our skills until at last we are able to walk among those who call themselves "programmers". Of course if we fall on our faces, we just turn back a few pages and begin again. Easy!!!

I hope I haven't offended anyone by my inferring that beginners are idiots. By all means, I teach several software packages professionally, and while my students flounder and make stupid mistakes I constantly remind them that I was in their shoes once upon a time. Of course, nothing beats personal instruction from a knowledgeable friend. You say you haven't any knowledgeable friends? If you are reading this then you are either a member or potential member of JACG. Your membership puts you in contact with hundreds of users of varying levels of computer literacy on an even more varied array of software. All one has to do is speak up at the meeting. I hope to see you all soon at JACG.

CURRENT NOTES SUBSCRIPTION

As a registered club, subscriptions to *Current Notes* are available to JACG club members for \$20.00 a year. To subscribe, fill out the following, and send it with a check, and a copy of your JACG membership card to:

CN Subscriptions
122 N. Johnson Road
Sterling, VA 22170

NAME: _____
STREET: _____
CITY: _____
STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
PHONE: (____) _____

I own an ATARI (circle all that apply)

ST Computers: 520ST 1040 ST MegaST2 MegaST4

8-bit Computers: 400 800 1200XL 800XL 65XE 130XE XEGS

Game Systems: 2600 7800

ACTION!

FOR BASIC PROGRAMMERS

A New Series

Dave Arlington - JAC6

Welcome to a new column in the pages of ANALOG Computing. What is the idea of starting this column? Well, one thing I have always heard a lot of is that "I would love to learn ACTION! since I have heard so much about it, but it is so different from BASIC, and the manual is no help. Where can I learn it?". You're in the right place. If you have some familiarity with BASIC programming you should be able to learn ACTION! using this column as a guide.

Why ACTION!? Let's talk a little bit first on the shortcomings of BASIC. It seems lately I have read a few articles from BASIC die-hards defending the language. There was an column in PC magazine a few months ago, and two recent ones in COMPUTE! In the editorial column of COMPUTE! (Sept. '87) Richard Mansfield talks about "... good old reliable, understandable, BASIC..." He writes that BASIC still gets used by most programmers because "BASIC is the most natural language."

I'm sorry, but that's a lot of hogwash. Anyone who thinks that BASIC is understandable and natural, please turn to any BASIC listing at least a page long and tell me exactly what the programmer is doing at each step. I don't think too many people could take me up on that. At least in TURBO BASIC, a public domain super-fast BASIC from Germany, we have the beginnings of a BASIC that is more natural and understandable. Let's face it, the real reason that BASIC is so prevalent today is that when personal computers first came out, BASIC was the only language that could fit in the amount of memory available. Since everyone grew up on BASIC, they felt most comfortable with it. It's like the number of Apple computers sold each year simply because the children have used them in school so much. It has very little to do with BASIC's inherent plusses. It's just force of habit. Look at the newer large memory machines like the ST. Very few people are programming in BASIC or if they are, it is something like GFA BASIC that looks almost like PASCAL.

I never did like ATARI BASIC. I have long searched for an alternative. I have tried LOGO, PASCAL, Assembly, TURBO BASIC and am now looking at C (and of course, ACTION!). LOGO is a really underrated language that is more than turtle graphics. However it is too slow and does not give you great detail about adding machine language routines to speed it up. KERN PASCAL is a great PASCAL version for the 8-bits and is almost as fast as ACTION! (look for an upcoming review), but really needs a RAMdisk to develop software and does not directly take advantage

of the ATARI's special capabilities since it is designed to be a standard language. (One that will run virtually unchanged on any machine.) Assembly language is like wanting to write your name and having to construct the pen and paper yourself from raw materials. If you have to program in BASIC, TURBO BASIC is the way to go and will be used for most comparisons with ACTION! in this column. It is still tied down to line numbers and wasteful variables though.

ACTION! is like the best of all worlds for anyone considering programming on the ATARI. It is almost as fast as machine language, but CAN be as easy to learn (or easier!) than BASIC. It is modular like C and PASCAL so you can build little pieces at a time and test them. However, the compiler and editor reside in a cartridge so you do not have to load those things separately like you would with PASCAL or C. It is written specifically for the ATARI so it takes advantage of all the ATARI's special features (with a few exceptions). It has many other beautiful things that make a programmer's life easy that we will be getting into as the series goes on.

This month, we'll talk a little about the negative things in ACTION!, show a little demo routine, and explain it just a little.

First, the negative things. One of the reasons more people don't program in ACTION! is the horrendous manual. Unusual for an OSS product, the manual abounds with typographical errors and important features that are glossed over in some appendix. Want some examples?

On page 61, an example of order of operations shows that $43 \text{ MOD } 7 * 2 + 19$ equals 21 when it should be 31. On page 167, they show the OPEN library procedure taking four arguments. A little later on page 188, they have an example where it only uses three. (Technically, this is correct. You CAN pass a PROCEDURE less than the correct number of arguments, but it only confused me.) Tucked away in a paragraph on page 167 is the notice that "Remember, the maximum length of a string is 255 characters." Funny, how could I remember, when there is no other reference in the manual? As a last example, on the second last page of the manual we are finally told in a note in an example that we can use a colon ":" to separate statements as well as a space.

The manual fails in other ways as well. One minute it is very detailed, assuming a novice user. The next minute we are breezing by bit-wise operators like everyone knows what they are. The manual does say that it is not intended as a tutorial on the language, however considering it is the only book to date written on the language, it could have been a little more introductory. Anyway.... I guess that's why this column was born. Out of my frustration with the manual, I felt there had to be others who wanted to learn ACTION! but needed someone to explain it better.

Having said all that. Let's look at the first sample program in ACTION!. It is essentially a routine that will load in any alternative character set. I have also provided the same routine in Turbo BASIC to show how much ACTION! can be like BASIC. THIS IS NOT meant to be an introduction to ACTION!. That will come next month. I just wanted to show how similar ACTION! can be to BASIC in some instances. Please ignore the first two procedures in the example for now, the ones call PROC Burst() and PROC BGet(). I borrowed these from the ACTION! ToolKit disk so the main routine would look more like our BASIC example (TURBO BASIC, that is). OK, here goes:

```

-----
5 REM Character set loader in
6 REM Turbo BASIC
7 -----
10 RAMTOP=PEEK(106)
20 POKE 106,RAMTOP-5
30 GRAPHICS 0
40 CHSETBASE=RAMTOP-4
50 OPEN #1,4,0,"D:FANCY3.FNT"
60 BGET #1,CHSETBASE*256,1024
70 CLOSE #1:POKE 756,CHSETBASE

```

```

; *****
; Character Set Loader in Action!
; *****

```

```

; For the purposes of this first
; article, ignore these first two
; procedures. I borrowed them from
; the Action! ToolKit for the purposes
; of this article.

```

```
PROC CID=$E456(BYTE areg,xreg)
```

```
CARD FUNC Burst(BYTE chan,mode,
CARD addr,buflen)
```

```
TYPE IOCB=[BYTE id,num,cmd,stat
CARD badr,padr,blen
BYTE a1,a2,a3,a4,a5,a6]
```

```
IOCB POINTER iptr
```

```
chan=*$07
iptr=$340+(chan LSH 4)
iptr.cmd=mode
iptr.blen=buflen
iptr.badr=addr
CID(0,chan LSH 4)
RETURN(iptr.blen)
```

```
CARD FUNC BGet(BYTE chan CARD addr,len)
```

```
CARD temp
```

```
temp=Burst(chan,7,addr,len)
RETURN (temp)
```

```

; *****
; This is the procedure we're concerned
; with this month. It is the main
; program. Notice how close it is to
; the TurboBasic code.

```

```
PROC main()
```

```
CARD HiMem=741, ChsetStart
```

```
BYTE ChsetBase=756
```

```
ChsetStart=(HiMem-1024)&$FC00
HiMem=ChsetStart
Open(1,"D:FANCY3.FNT",4,0)
BGet(1,ChsetStart,1024)
Close(1) ChsetBase=ChsetStart/256
```

```
RETURN
```

Let's get started. Boot your ACTION! cartridge and type in the example exactly as you see it. You can leave off the semi-colons and anything after them on a line. They are ACTION!'s version of BASICs REMark statement. You may also substitute the name of any character font you have in place of FANCY3.FNT.

When you're all done typing, hit Shift-Control-W to write your file to disk. Then hit Shift-Control-M to go to the monitor. (Just a white bar across the top of the screen.) Hit "C" to compile your program. The compiler will complain if you have made any errors and will put you in the approximate area of the mistake when you go back to the editor. Assuming it compiled OK, make sure your disk with the font you named is in the drive and hit "R" to run your compiled program. Now go back to the editor and look at your program in its new font.

We'll just take a brief look at the main program this month and explain more next time. The main program starts where it says PROC main() and ends where it says, RETURN. Sort of like a GOSUB or PROCEDURE in TURBO BASIC. The first two lines in the main program that start with the words CARD and BYTE will be explained in great detail next month. Right now we'll just say that those are variables we will be using in our main program.

The first actual line in the program says that we are going to start our new character set at HiMem (which stands for the top of RAM memory, or Himeory) minus 1024 bytes. 1024 bytes is the size of a character set. That funny stuff at the end with the dollar sign and the FC00 we'll deal with some other time. It just makes sure our character set starts in the right place.

The next line resets where the computer thinks High Memory is to where the character set starts. That way the computer won't go high enough to write stuff into our new

character set. By the way, do you notice that in BASIC, we use memory location 106, called RAMTOP and we also have to call Graphics 0 to set things right because the computer puts the screen display stuff under RAMTOP? Well, ACTION! stuffs some other stuff up there besides the screen display under RAMTOP. HiMem (location 741 and 742) has the screen display and the other stuff OVER it not under it. That's why we don't have to do a Graphics 0 call.

Next we Open a channel to the disk file we want to use. This is just like BASIC. Next we use the BGet command to load in 1024 bytes of our new character set and stick them at ChsetStart. The BGet command is not built into the ACTION! cartridge. It is part of an extra disk, called the ACTION! Toolkit. BGet, which stands for Block Get, is built into Turbo BASIC. It simply reads in a block of bytes from the specified device. In this example, we are getting 1024 bytes of an alternate character set from the disk file D:FANCY3.FNT.

This is one nice thing about ACTION! that BASIC can't do. Someone else can write a routine to do a BGet command for instance, and you can load it in and use it without having to understand how it works. For instance, now YOU have a routine that loads in an alternate character set that you can use in your own ACTION! programs!

The next line simply closes the disk file and points the computer to our new character set. The RETURN ends the program.

Next month, we really will start to get into ACTION! from the ground up. We'll talk about the difference between an interpreted language like BASIC and a compiled language like ACTION! We'll also discuss how variables are handled in ACTION! and why it makes ACTION! so much faster. And of course, some sort of demo program you can type in.

DISK(s) OF THE MONTH

John H. Dean - JACG

Remember "and the first shall be last"

We have lots of goodies for you this month on JACG disks #180D & #181D. Both sides of both disks are filled to the brim with programs. What a bargain at \$2.00 each! (If you are a member and get them at the November meeting)

Let me tell you a little bit about them. Disk #180D came to us by way of Page 6, their number #37, titled SPEEDY ONES. All of the programs on this side of the disk run WITHOUT BASIC. If you do boot with BASIC, you will be instructed to reboot to DOS, and run them using the "L" from the DOS menu. File names are TRICKY.OBJ, BACKTRAK.OBJ, GAUNTLET.OBJ, SMUSH.OBJ, and BALLONE.OBJ. TRICKY, BACKTRAK & GAUNTLET include instructions. SMUSH is a fairly standard climbing game, and BALLONE a super demo - just enjoy.

GAUNTLET was copyrighted by Donald Lebeau in 1984 to be "user supported". If you like it, and play it, you can send \$35.00 to Mr. Lebeau (address included in the 'docs') and you will be registered, receive a manual, an enhanced version with 6 playing levels, and can be entered into a high score contest, run every 6 months, for \$1,000.00! For every friend you get to sign up, you get \$5.00 - for every 100, \$100.00. There is no limit on the number of friends you can get to sign up. User's group count, but BBS's don't.

Basically, the game lets you be a pilot of spaceship that is penetrating the defenses of an enemy battle group. Help can be called up during the play of the game. There are fifty different screens, 17 types of enemy ships, and 10 different weapons. The manual illustrates and describes them all. What a Game!

The back side of disk #181D is also from Page 6, their #41 titled SPECIAL DEMOS, which include BOINK.OBJ, FUJIBONK.OBJ, HOLLYMED.OBJ and the famous CESDEMO.OBJ that was shown a few years ago at the Consumer's Electronics Show at Chicago. Atari used this program to draw people into their booth. It worked!

I've saved the best for last. Remember "and the first shall be last"? These free programs also came to us via Page 6 #'s 38 & 41, and were written by Charlie Parker of Aurora, Colorado, who says a donation will help him write more. I hope he does.

I think they are terrific! They are animated story books - for early readers - with a good story line and wonderful graphics and sound effects. The first one, Micro Tale #1, is on the back side of disk #180D, and booted up with BASIC tells the tale of "The Noisy Giant". The quiet and peaceful village of Hushville, with its meadows, forest and wild animals, is visited by a friendly giant, with unexpected results. "Tell and Show" it to your children/grandchildren - they will love it. Mine certainly did.

Micro Tale #2 is on the front side of disk #181D, and is the story of "Caveman Joe", complete with a Sabre Tooth Tiger, a mammoth, and an active volcano. Again, the graphics and sound is interwoven with the story very cleverly.

Whatever your taste, these two disks are a "must have".

8-Bit Disk prices are:

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Disk of the month...\$2.00
Other library disks...3.00

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\$5.00



From Here to There

Neil Van Oost Jr. - JACG

This is the second article on how to get from one format of picture file to another. This time I will attempt to show you how to convert pictures created from the "Flower Garden" (Micro Illustrator format) to PrintShop icons. Also how to prepare these pictures for black and white and color printing with Billboard. The "Flower Garden" was written by Allan Moose and Marian Lorenz and appeared in the November 1988 issue of ANTIC.

First we will need to modify the program just a little to make it easier to mass-produce pictures. You will need a formatted disk to start with. Copy the FLOWER.BAS program from your November 1988 copy of the disk version of ANTIC or from the disk you saved it to when you typed it in, to the formatted disk. Load the program and change or insert the following lines:

```
62 DIM P$(18),PN$(5)
63 P$(1,6)="D1:PIC"
12 NNN=RND(0)*100000:NNN=INT(NNN):
PN$=STR$(NNN):P$(7,11)=PN$: P$(12,15)=".MIC"
800 IO=B48:CL.#1:0.#1,8,0,P$:POKE IO+2,11:POKE
IO+4,PEEK(88):POKE IO+5,PEEK(89)
```

What we have just done is created a five digit random number generator and included it into the name we are going to give to the file we are going to save. The original program had only the name 'PICTURE' for the output file. By making the changes above we can save eleven different Micropainter format pictures to a single density formatted disk, each with a unique name with the .MIC (Micropainter) extension. The .MIC extension is important as you will see later on. Save your changes to the disk with the name FLOWER2.BAS.

I will not go into how to run the FLOWER GARDEN program, as the article is well written and easy to follow. So please refer to page 40 of your November 1988 ANTIC issue for program run instructions and create eight or ten "flower" picture files.

Now that you have your picture files ready we can continue. You will need the program BBKARTIST. Other picture programs can also be used but this is one of my favorites. When you first load one of your flower files into BBKARTIST the colors on the bottom of the screen will be color 4 = white, color 0 = red/orange, color 1 = black, color 2 = white. Color 4 is the background and the other colors are your flower. Change color 2 to any color different than those already displayed. Select the 'Nlarge' function and look at the lines of the flower. You will see that each line is composed of three different colors.

If at a later time you intend on printing big colored pictures using BILLBOARD, (See FROM HERE TO THERE in the April '88 Newsletter) you will have to change these all to one color by painting over them. But for now all we are concerned with is getting them all one color for black and white printing with Billboard, so all we have to do is change colors 0,1, and 2 to black of the same luminance. This is done by using the SetClr function.

You are now ready to save the picture back to disk. I usually name it with the same number that was generated in the modified Flower program i.e. If the original name was 'PIC27444.MIC', I would type in P27444 and BBKARTIST would add the '.PIC' extender (P27444.PIC). Also use another disk to store your color corrected flower pictures, as they are not in Micropainter format anymore but were converted to compressed Micro Illustrator format by BBKARTIST. After you have corrected your disk full of flower pictures you are ready for the next step.

A copy of the ANTIC program Graphic Shop, by Charles Jackson and Darryl May is needed. This program will convert your Micropainter or Microillustrator pictures to PrintShop icons. Although you can use the picture files directly as they come from the Flower program, it is my personal opinion that clearer icons can be obtained by first making all the line colors black with BBKARTIST, as in the above paragraph. Graphic Shop is pretty straight forward, just make sure to follow the prompts. If for example, it says to press any key and that RETURN exits to main menu well the any key means any key 'EXCEPT' return will write your file.

When using Graphic Shop, you have the option of converting the whole screen or just a part (about 1/6th) of the screen. Try converting the whole screen with each picture, then convert an interesting part of the picture. You will notice that the icons that were made from whole pictures lose quite a lot of definition. Some of these you may not

want to keep. The ones on which you converted only a part of the picture to an icon, always, with out fail seem to come out clear and sharp. I guess that this just goes to prove that you cannot put ten pounds of sugar in a five pound sack.

Now that you have your pictures converted to printshop icons, you can print them out 70 to a page with The PrintShop Picture Print Utility, by Rick Harroun. This program can be found on JACG library disk 129. This is a handy print-out to keep with the disk. It makes life a lot easier when selecting that special icon you need.

When running BILBOARD you will have to have your pictures in Micropainter format, so you may want to have a copy of another ANTIC program, Rapid Graphics Converter, by Charles Jackson, on hand. This is a quick way to convert from Microillustrator to Micropainter and several other picture formats.

Printing black and white copies of your flowers presents no problems, but color is another story. As I mentioned above, the picture lines as they come from the Flower program are in three colors. To dress up your flower picture, you will have to make all the lines of your flower one color by painting them -- this way the lines are under one color register instead of three and you can use four colors in your picture. This can take up a lot of time, especially with a detailed picture containing a lot of lines. Also, to jump back a couple of paragraphs, if you icons come out with gaps in the lines, you may want to paint the lines as above. The gaps are caused by one color register not being converted on a whole picture conversion.

Well I hope you have enjoyed this second part of "From Here To There". Happy picture making. Neil



PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

ALEX PIGNATO - D1' Hackers - 10/88

This month, this column is dedicated to the many **ATARI USERS GROUPS** throughout the world, without whom, the **ATARI 8 BIT** would wither and die.

We all know that we are getting very little support from **ATARI** & software companies, but in this column I want to give full and proper recognition to the **USERS GROUPS** which are really keeping the **8 BIT** alive and well.

The first Users Group that comes to mind is the **JERSEY ATARI COMPUTER GROUP**. The friendship and help that we, in the **OL' HACKERS** have received from them cannot be measured. As late as yesterday, I was on the phone with their **CHIEF LIBRARIAN, SAM CORY**. Aside from exchanging pleasantries, we always discuss what is new in the **8 BIT** world, and we then proceed to exchange **PUBLIC DOMAIN** software that each of us has received from our various sources. The help we have received from **SAM**, cannot be described, and in return, his group have learned to use **SPARTA DOS**, through a visit and lecture at one of their meetings by **KRIS HOLTEGAARD**, and the exchange of **P.D.** software and information about **SPARTA DOS**. It is through an exchange of disk libraries with **SAM**, that we recently acquired **PAGE SIX (ENGLAND)** disks, as well as disks from **S.P.A.C.E.** -- This exchange doubled our library, with many disks which are as good or better than many commercially sold disks. I could not believe the wealth of quality **P.D.** software being put out by the users themselves. If you haven't checked out the library catalogue, you owe it to yourselves to do so. Hard copies of the catalogue which include some brief descriptions can be reviewed at any meeting. Also the current Monthly **NEWSLETTERS** contain listings of new library software ---- (a couple of the best reasons for belonging to a **USERS GROUP**, the ability to get **P.D.** software at a reasonable price, as well as knowledge and information).

...

To all of you hard working volunteers and unknown people running the various **USERS CLUBS**, we send our **THANKS** to each and every one of you dedicated **ATARI USERS**. It is you who are keeping the **8 BIT** alive and well.....without you, the **8 BIT** would be a memory, or as someone so aptly put it, it would make a nice **DOOR STOP!**...

ed. note: I found this article and tribute too significant to pass up, and have excerpted that portion of this Oct. 1988 article which applies to the JACG and the **ATARI 8-Bit** computers.

LEARNING TO PROGRAM IN ATARI BASIC

LESSON 5 Version 1.08

Built-in Functions

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CONTENTS:

Functions

INT(), RND(), VAL(), SQR(),
ASC(), CHR\$(), SGN(), ABS(),
etc.

Random Numbers

Coin Flipping

Plus more tricks and treats

This is Lesson 5 of Learning to program in Atari BASIC, brought to you by Jackson Beebe. Contact me at the address at the end of the lesson.

Functions:

As we progress to programming longer and more difficult applications, we will need to use complex mathematical and computational concepts like sine, cosine, tangent, square root, integer value of, etc. We could write BASIC code to instruct the computer to perform these operations, but... fortunately the authors of the BASIC programming language have foreseen this need, and have supplied us with built-in FUNCTIONS to accomplish these tasks. This is one reason it is easiest to learn to program in a HIGH level language, like BASIC.

These built-in functions are just sitting there, quietly out of sight, ready to help out at a moments notice, when

called on by correctly worded BASIC statements. If we never have occasion to call these functions, we would never even know they existed.

===== Square Root: SQR() =====

For example, let's say we need to calculate the square

root of a number stored in a variable called NUM. This can be done using the function SQR() which returns the square root as follows:

```
10 REM ** Square Root Demo **
20 NUM = 144
30 ROOT = SQR(NUM)
40 ? "The root of ";NUM; " is ";ROOT
50 END
```

Note SQR in uppercase letters, with the number or variable in parenthesis. What could be easier?
We could have said:

```
20 ROOT = SQR(144)
```

Numbers or variables may be used. Complex expressions may also be placed in the parenthesis.

===== Integer: INT() =====

In everyday programming, it is often very handy to take the INTEGER value of a number. This means the digits to the LEFT of the decimal point, WITHOUT ANY ROUNDING OFF. Note that special condition of Integer. It DOES NOT round. This is important. For example:

```
INT(3.22) = 3
INT(14.999) = 14
```

```
NUM = 2.8
INT(NUM * 2) = 5
```

Again, numbers or expressions may be in the parenthesis. It is difficult to see where we would need to use INT, but keep an eye open, and we'll see uses before the end of this lesson.

===== Rounding: =====

It happens we can use INT to force rounding off where desired. This is a biggie, and even though you will probably not memorize this process right now, make a mental note that you have a method on file for ROUNDING

and remember where you put this for future reference. Yes, another Handy Household Hack friends.

Rounding may be forced, by adding a decimal value to a number, THEN taking the integer value, like this:

```
10 REM ** Rounding Demo **
20 NUM = 2.7
30 RNUM = INT(NUM + .5)
40 PRINT RNUM
50 END
```


This will round to the nearest whole number (integer) like this:

a) $2.7 + .5 = 3.2$
The integer value of $3.2 = 3$

b) $2.2 + .5 = 2.7$
 $\text{INT}(2.7) = 2$

c) $39.9 + .5 = 40.4$
 $\text{INT}(40.4) = 40$

d) $12.5 + .5 = 13$
 $\text{INT}(13) = 13$

Note that it rounds at or above a decimal fraction of .5 as in example d). Fractional portions less than .5 are dropped, and over .5 are raised to the next number.

Clever you say, but, I need to round to the nearest 100th, as I am writing a money program that needs to round to the nearest cent? Try this:

50 READ A
60 ROUND A = $\text{INT}((A + .005) * 100) / 100$
70 PRINT ROUND A
80 DATA etc

Note double parenthesis, and that it adds .005 and multiplies by 100, takes the Integer value, then divides that quantity by 100. Try examples for yourself. This rounds to the nearest penny.

Continued next month

JERSEY ATARI COMPUTER GROUP TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 1988

* Revised balance as of December 31, 1987 \$2,163.49

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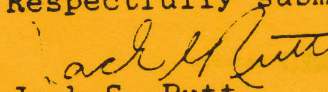
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* Actual balance in Crestmont Fed. Sav. Bnk. was not established until the account was closed in May 1988.

Respectfully submitted


Jack S. Rutt
Treasurer

JACG



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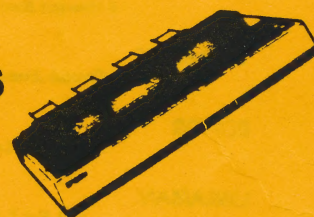
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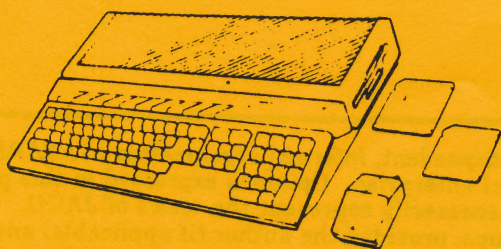
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